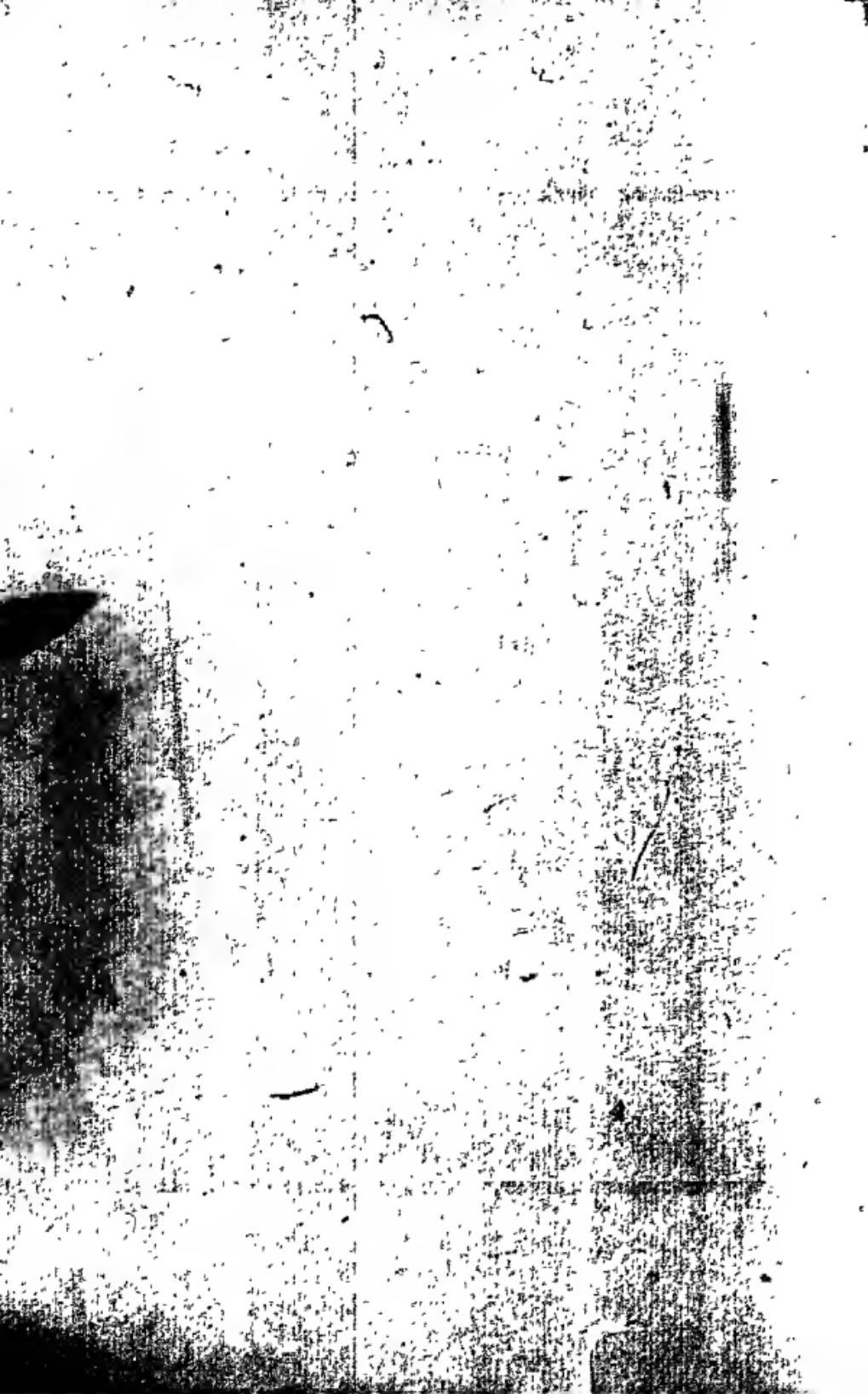


THE NEW
NORTHWEST.





1617

PREFACE.

TO THE CANADIAN PEOPLE:

Much has been written and spoken about the North West, but a vast deal of the most important information is locked up in official reports and blue books, which are open to comparatively few. It is also a fact that the popular idea is, that when the Northwest is spoken of, it means only the Province of Manitoba, or at most the country contiguous to the line of the Canada Pacific Railway. I have therefore in my humble way tried to bring before your notice the much vaster country, which is the heritage of Canada—"The New North West"—in the hope that before long the railway I allude to will be built and this vast and rich region be added to our civilization and commerce. I have condensed and compiled these pages from the writings of Mackenzie, Butler, Hewson; the reports of the geological survey of Canada, and Mr. Sandford Fleming's reports on the railway surveys, besides extracts from various newspapers, so that all that is placed before you in this little brochure, may be considered as having been taken from the most reliable and independent sources.

Your obedient servant,

W. J. MORRIS.

PERTH, January, 1887.

THE NEW NORTHWEST.

A few years ago Capt. Butler published two interesting books on the North Western parts of Canada, the one called the "Great Lone Land," and the other the "Wild North Land." The first referred chiefly to the region south of the Saskatchewan, and the name "Great Lone Land" no longer belongs to it. The C.P. Railway traverses it from the Red River to the Pacific; and the few straggling houses around Fort Garry have grown into the enterprising city of Winnipeg, and towns and villages dot the landscape. But to the north of the Saskatchewan the "Wild North Land" still remains unchanged, with its vast and fertile prairies, its noble forests, grand rivers and magnificent lakes, rich in all that goes to build up a nation. This great land, the "New North West," but awaits the coming of the Winnipeg and North Pacific Railway to awaken from the sleep of long ages, and at the sound of the steam whistle to pour out with no stinted hand the enormous riches which she claims as her own. This is not only the opinion of the writer but also of some of the foremost journalists of the world, as being already a necessity, not merely to afford room to the thousands of agriculturists who would flock to its fertile valleys, but also to capitalists looking for profitable investments in coal, salt, oil, copper, and many other industries, while the great prairies, now so silent when contrasted with the time but a few years since, that countless herds of buffalo wandered over them, will again resound to the bellowing of thousands of domestic cattle or the trampling of the hoofs of numberless troops of horses, but also as affording in addition to all these a still shorter route between Asiatic countries and Europe than is possible by any other way, as may be seen further on, and at same time have its Pacific terminus more distant from danger of any foreign power than at present.

I shall now endeavor to give some idea of the region which such a road will open, and in evidence that *the time for action is now come* will quote a recent article in the London *Times*, which says: "Canada, our correspondent tells us, is beginning to doubt whether it has not been pushing matters a little too fast, but when we read his statement of the vast and varied capabilities of the region into which the railway has been pushed, the fertility of the soil, diversified, when this fails, by stores of timber, which he pronounces seemingly inexhaustible, and by mineral wealth in the form of gold, iron and copper, with coal in abundance near them, we can hardly question the correctness of his conclusion that the disappointment now felt can be no more than temporary, and that in a short time the doubt will be past whether the Canadian Pacific Railway has been successful, but whether there is not room for a parallel line to do a like work to the north of the present line." Thus wrote the London

Times on 25th Oct. last, and about the same time the *Scientific American* said: "The country north of us (the United States) is not all Arctic, however, for from it those who know best hardly realize how vast is the new domain of arable land which has just been opened by the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and how much more remains to enter—a new north, vast in resources of all kinds stands ready for occupation." Wheat is raised fifteen hundred miles beyond the boundary of the United States. Nor is it wheat alone that flourishes in the New North. The grandeur of the Canadian forests is probably the one salient feature known to everybody. The latest discoveries indicate that the greatest surprises may prove to be in regard to the mineral wealth of these northern regions." Thus it is seen that the leading thinkers of England and the United States are beginning to understand what a rich empire Canada possesses, and it is time that Canadian enterprise should show itself worthy of such possessions and not leave them neglected or at best to be kept solely as a hunting ground for trappers and fur traders. I am glad to add that prominent capitalists in our midst have also begun to think that it is time the New North West is opened to commerce, and last session of the Dominion Parliament they obtained a charter to build a railway which will I trust soon change the "Wild North Land" into the land which will be the desired haven to millions who will make their homes in the New North West. As the country is so well known close to Winnipeg I will begin my remarks at the Narrows of Lake Manitoba, trusting my readers will kindly accompany me across the continent, and find that as we go westerly both climate and country improve, although along the whole route we shall find no desert or sage plains, and if we do meet with some swamps in the easterly portion, they can in almost all cases be reclaimed and made excellent arable lands. At the "Narrows" the railway would first touch on the waters of Lake Manitoba, which can be used for navigation southwards to the rich prairies of the first prairie level, and extending northwards connects via the Fairford river with the great Lake Winnipeg. Lake Winnipeg is also justly celebrated for the quantities and qualities of its white fish, and in the immediate vicinity of the Narrows are to be found abundant supplies of marbles, gypsum, &c. A little further on and it crosses the Dauphin river, which empties a considerable lake of the same name, which lies to the south and also enters the southerly end of Lake Winnipegoosis, which last stretches its waters 130 miles to the north and reaches within about four miles of the Saskatchewan river, from which it is separated by the Mossy Portage, at a point which it has been proposed to canal in order to extend the navigation into that great river. By the navigation of Lakes Dauphin and Winnipegoosis and the streams entering them, considerable quantities of spruce and other timber suitable for railway construction would be made available, and large tracts of fertile land, specially on Lake Dauphin, would be accessible, while the numerous salt springs on Salt Point in Lake Winnipegoosis, and in the slopes of the Duck and Porcupine mountain, near which the railway would pass, would soon be utilized and shortly make this section as important to the Manitobans as are the salt works near Syracuse to the State of New York. Further on the valleys of the Swan, Red Deer and Carrot rivers would be reached, all of which from their fertile soils, as well as the ease of obtaining supplies of timber, and good water, are certain to attract numerous settlers. I may specially mention the Swan river valley, where one tract of land of some sixty miles in length by about twenty in width is noted as being exceptionally rich and specially suited for agricul-

ture. Beyond this the country is largely composed of undulating prairie, with frequent small lakes, and ridges which are generally well wooded, and this is said to be the character of the country in this section as far north as it has been opened. Further west and Fort a la Corne is reached on the Saskatchewan river, a few miles below the point where the two great streams unite, and thus would bring the railway in contact with the navigation of these rivers which enclose between them an immense amount of valuable land, and as a Government geological explorer announced a short time ago in the Toronto *Mail* "these lands contain in addition to their value for farming purposes, billions of tons of excellent coal." The land at Fort a la Corne is of excellent quality and for many years past a considerable amount of wheat and other cereals have been raised there with unvarying success, and a few miles to the south lies the flourishing settlement of Prince Albert, the produce of whose rich grain fields would without doubt add to the freight traffic of this new Northern railway. The next important stream that would be reached is the Beaver River, which flowing northwards to the Churchill river would develop a vast tract of country with heavily wooded valleys, and whose rocky ranges are believed to be rich in iron and other minerals, while the numerous lakes teem with fish of the finest quality. Next the very important settlement of Lac la Biche would be reached. Here there is a large half-breed population and a R. C. Mission, with church, convent, &c. All around the lake are to be seen comfortable dwellings and well-cultivated fields, which yield abundant supplies of the best wheat, while the lake gives an unlimited quantity of white fish. Westerly from this and the Athabasca river is crossed. This fine navigable river which rises in the Yellow Head Pass of the Rocky Mountains is the beginning of the most important section of the "New North West," as in its course northwards from the point of crossing by the Winnipeg and North Pacific railway, it traverses a great region of most unusual value, whose mineral and agricultural riches would alone be sufficient to warrant the construction of the railway; but I can best describe it by the following extract from a Winnipeg newspaper: "*A land where petroleum runs to waste, and minerals of all kinds are plentiful!*" The following is taken from a lecture delivered in Winnipeg by Captain William Kennedy, of St. Andrews, the Arctic navigator: "I would also call attention to the region about Athabasca, which only awaits development. Petroleum is there running to waste, the oil springs have overflowed the surface of the country for a space of more than forty miles, and running along to the river the oil is carried into the lake where it floats on the surface. The only use at present made of it is by the Indians boiling it to the consistency of pitch and using it for coating their canoes, &c. In the same region the finest and purest salt is thrown from a sort of fountain; it is nearly as fine as flour and brilliantly white. In this same section is found coal, sulphur, copper, asbestos, and other valuable minerals. A letter just issued from that quarter dated January 1st, says: 'We have abundance of milk and cream, two of our cows having already calved, and some of our hens, of which we have thirty, have begun to lay. already and give us from six to eight eggs daily. We have fresh ducks and geese, deer meat, moose meat, fresh tongue, beef, also delicious white fish and trout.' Not a bad bill of fare if we add to it the wild fruits with which the region abounds, and the vegetables which cultivation produces. Amongst the wild fruits that I know of are raspberries, strawberries, cranberries, gooseberries, currants, salmon berry, &c., and rhubarb, turnips, carrots and cabbages grow luxuriantly. At the

"H.B. Co.'s post here and at Churchill, which is on nearly the same parallel, "they raise cattle in sufficient numbers to supply them with beef, butter and "milk. I do not know if any attempt has yet been made to raise wheat at "Athabasca, but the Peace River is close by and nearly in the same parallel, "and we all know that the finest wheat grown on the continent comes from "the valley of Peace river, a river whose outlet is at the Athabasca Lake. "That this region with its vast wealth will much longer remain unnoticed and "unknown is not to be dreamed of." The Athabasca river region is also similarly described in various reports made by Professors Macoun and Bell of the geological survey as well as by the explorers for the C.P. Railway, when the northern line was proposed. By the Athabasca river access can be had as well to the great lake of the same name, which extends its waters in an easterly direction for over two hundred miles, with a width of from fifteen to thirty, and while its fisheries are likely to prove of great value, its northern shores are said to be like those of Lake Huron, rich in copper and other metals; besides all this its outlet, the Slave River, will afford by its navigation easy access to the mighty Mackenzie River, which flows from the Great Slave lake to the Arctic sea, traversing an immense district suitable for agriculture, grazing and lumbering, *for this vast country is not Arctic in its character*, but is a region where the cereals, wheat, oats, rye, &c., come to their greatest perfection, in proof of which we have only to note that wheat grown at Fort Liard, on the river of the Mountains some hundreds of miles north of Dunvegan, has been pronounced the finest grown in America, and all that is needed is human enterprise to demand of the virgin soil a surrender of its latent wealth, to ensure a favorable answer and an ample reward. The basin of the Mackenzie, which includes in it the valleys of the Athabasca, Peace and many other large rivers, has an area of 550,000 square miles, and of this vast extent fully 9-10 is suitable for the occupation of civilized man, the climate being similar to that of eastern Ontario. Dr. King, naturalist to the expedition in search of Sir John Franklin, stated to the committee of the British House of Commons: "Speaking of the very vast region of which the Athabasca is the southern boundary, I believe the temperature to be about the same as Montreal in Canada." And in 1874 Mr. Horetsky, in the C.P.R. exploration reports, says: "The climate of this region and of the Peace River valley generally is somewhat similar to that of Red River, but the extremes of heat and cold are not so great, and the climate is dry and salubrious, and is tempered by the westerly winds which here prevail and are mild." This is the region which extends, bounded on the west by the Rocky Mountains, far to the north where the Great Slave Lake expands its lonely waters, swarming with fish, and whose shores are known to be rich in flowing wells of petroleum and large deposits of excellent salt, while the vast Mackenzie River, a second St. Lawrence, flows north some 1,200 miles to where it debouches into the Arctic Ocean, and makes easy of access what is said to be the best whale fishing ground of that far off region. I have however said enough to show that without going so far North there is in the valley of the river and Lake Athabasca ample attraction to tempt the agriculturist, the capitalist and the miner, and only the construction of this railway is required to develop the vast wealth now lying dormant and useless to mankind, so will proceed westward from the crossing of the Athabasca over a slightly more elevated country, eminently adapted for grazing when the Lesser Slave Lake is reached. This fine sheet of water, about .75 miles long and 6 or 7 wide, is lined for miles, specially on its

southern shores with immense fields of blue joint grass, which we are told is frequently higher than a man's head, and of which quantities are cut to serve as fodder for the cattle kept at the H. B. Co.'s post at the western end of the Lake. Passing on from this lake a fertile prairie is followed either through the valley of the Heart or Little Smoky River till the Great Peace River is reached. This grand stream rises on the *west side* of the Rocky Mountains and flows across them, and flowing northwards finally enters the Slave River close to Lake Athabasca. This river whose great valley is often called the "Garden of the North," comprising, as Professor Macoun estimated in 1880, about 16,352,000 square acres of good land, requires a more extended notice, as it is valuable not only for its vast rich prairies, its wide, deep, navigable stream, which will carry steamers 900 miles from its escape from the mountains, away down its stream, before meeting a single obstruction to navigation, but also as it affords in its upper course the *lowest and easiest pass across the main range of the Rocky Mountains*. In the C.P.R. report for 1874 Professor Macoun says: "As far as I could judge the whole of the land from Little Slave Lake to Smoky River, and on up to the base of the mountain, is of the very best quality. As I did not travel over the whole tract I, cannot say from actual observation that this is so, but what I saw (at least 200 miles in length) of it was the *best land I had seen anywhere*. There was neither marsh nor swamp to any extent, but one rich extended expanse of rich soil altogether devoid of stones. My observation bears out all that has been said of the fertility of the land along the Peace River; although I am much disappointed to find scarcely any signs of farming at Dunvegan. Two small fields seem all that have been cultivated there, one for barley and the other for potatoes. This goes on from year to year. The same seed is probably used year after year, as it certainly is with the potatoes; game is still too plentiful for much attention to be given to agriculture. The stream is about 400 yards wide at this point." It will be seen that this region of country along the Peace has more of the prairie vegetation than the wooded country at Slave Lake. Its flora indicates both a drier and a warmer climate than they have at the latter place. The prairie vegetation is almost identical with that at Edmonton, except a few eastern species. That the Peace River country has an exceptional climate, any one seeing it must confess. While we were travelling through it the constant record was "warm sunshine, west wind, balmy atmosphere and skies of the brightest blue." Even as late as 15th of Oct. the thermometer was 48° at daylight and 61° in the shade at noon." The foregoing is enough to satisfy my readers of the great value of the Peace River Valley, but I cannot refrain from quoting in addition from the Toronto *Globe* of 27th Nov. last, which publishes an interview with the Rev. Mr. Brick, a missionary near Dunvegan. Mr. Brick said: "It would have to be a very good offer that would tempt me to live away from the Peace River; although my stipend is only \$750 a year, and if I buy flour I have to pay over \$16 a bag of two lbs. Peace River has been truly said by Oglivie, the Dominion Land Surveyor, to be the only river, worth calling a river, west of the St. Lawrence. It is a grand river, and at Peace River crossing is nearly half a mile wide. Some sixty miles below Vermillion there is a fall in the river of about eight feet. But for this fall the river is navigable for a distance of a thousand miles from the Rockies, and the Dominion Surveyor told me that the matter of the fall could be got over without much difficulty. The banks of Peace River form a very gradual slope upward, some two and a half miles

"wide, where they run into a table land about 800 feet above the level of the river. The southern bank of the Peace River is excellently timbered, and on the northern shore is found a rich and splendid prairie country. The choicest prairie country in the district is a strip of about seventy-five miles long, and from fifteen to twenty miles wide, but there is an unlimited amount of land back of that, more or less timbered, which the surveyors who went through the country in 1883 tell me is as well adapted for farming purposes as the prairie itself, and is easily cleared. The soil is a rich black loam of from twelve to sixteen inches in depth, having a blue clay sub-soil underneath, perhaps two feet deep. On the high ground there is generally seven or eight inches of sand between the two soils. * * * *

"The H. B. Co.'s officers for the last twenty years have been growing wheat on the banks—the low lying land. But the supply of this land is limited, while that of the high land is practically unlimited. You could take one half the population of the whole Dominion up there, and place them on good farms. I planted my seed on the highest ground I could find and the result was most satisfactory, as you can see, by these specimens of barley and wheat."

The *Globe* says the "samples were well grown, large and very hard, and fit to compare with that grown anywhere, although several varieties were mixed together." Mr. Brick continued to say that the "climate is good, and is much milder than that of Manitoba and the lower lying portions of the Northwest Provinces." He has ploughed as late as the 28th of October, and sown as early as the 12th of April. Continuing, Mr. Brick said, "We do not need to feed our horses at all; they are out all winter, and paw through the 18 inches of snow (we rarely get it deeper) down to the rich prairie grass. The horned cattle we house during the period I named. In summer we suffer far less from the summer frosts than the people of Manitoba." The above is the opinion of a gentleman who has now been a resident of the Peace River country for some years, and has had a practical trial of its capabilities for farming, and comment is unnecessary. So as the above quotations cover the general aspect of the whole Peace River country eastwards from the mountains and north to the Mackenzie River, I shall now briefly call attention to the easy means this great river affords for crossing the main range of the Rockies. Mr. Sandford Fleming in his report for 1880 says:—"The Parsnip and Finlay Rivers are each about 500 feet wide at their confluence, and below that point the united stream is known as the Peace River, and immediately enters the pass of that name. This pass is bounded for thirty miles by mountains rising from 4,000 to 5,000 feet above the water on each side, leaving a valley about half a mile wide between their bases, through which the river (600 to 800 feet wide) winds from side to side, leaving benches first on one side then on the other. * * * * "The only place where the actual mountain slopes abut on the river is for three quarters of a mile at the base of Mount Selwyn, which is there bold and rocky, and rises at an average slope of one in three."

This famous "Pass of the Peace River," which is known to be lower by at least 1,000 feet than any other through the mountains, would then conduct the railway through a region of British Columbia similar to that which is followed by the C. P. R., i.e., well-timbered valleys, whose lumber will yet prove of great value; and whose bordering mountains are known to be rich in metalliferous wealth, such as gold, silver-bearing lead, &c., and finally the

river Skeena is reached, and its valley would be followed to the upper end of the Tsimpson Peninsula, at the outer extremity of which is placed Port Simpson, the proposed terminus of the Winnipeg and North Pacific Railway. Port Simpson is reported on by competent observers as being one of the best harbors on the North Pacific coast, and is most advantageously situated as the terminus of a railway desiring to compete for a portion of the Asiatic trade, as it is nearer, as will be seen by the subjoined table, to the chief ports of Japan, China, &c., than any other, while its capabilities as a harbor are succinctly given in the following extract from the report of Capt. J. C. Burridge in 1880:

"During a residence of four months in the locality of Port Simpson and Chatham Sound, I did not experience six hours of fog, and during that period there were only four parts of days and nights in which it would have been impossible to see to navigate vessels into port. I have no hesitation in saying that it is one of the best harbors I was ever in. * * * * Ships could lie along side the docks at all times, and would require no towage either in entering or going to sea."

From Port Simpson to say Yokohama is	3,850 miles.
" Port Moody to "	4,242 "
" San Francisco to "	4,470 "

But even when the terminus at Port Simpson is reached, there yet remains to be noticed the valuable region of the Queen Charlotte Islands, which lie almost immediately in front, at a general distance of about 75 miles from the mainland. These islands are at present attracting considerable attention from their value in hard coal, timber and grazing lands, as well as the inexhaustible fisheries of cod, halibut, salmon and other valuable sea products, which will yet make them second only in value to the coasts of Newfoundland, while but a short distance to the north lie the important mining districts of Alaska, where already our enterprising American neighbors are carrying on most extensive quartz crushing for gold, on such a scale that it is said one party from San Francisco recently paid one million dollars for a property there, and there is no doubt but that when properly explored, as it can only be when the railway reaches Port Simpson, that our own territory behind the long narrow southerly extension of Alaska will prove to be equally rich in metalliferous wealth, as it is known to be in the quality and extent of its valuable forests of yellow cedar.

I trust I have now brought before my readers in an acceptable and as short and concise a manner as possible the value of our *New Northwest*, a vast country which only requires to be developed by the building of a railway to increase the value of our Dominion in the eyes of the civilized world a hundred times more than it now occupies, and with the certainty of affording to hundreds of thousands happy and contented homes; so that not many years can pass when these now lonely plains will have their towns and cities, and Canada will be numbered among the great and wealthy nations of the earth.